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Town of Aurora  
**Information Report**  
No. CMS24-013

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**Subject:** Concerts in the Park Food Vendor Status Update

**Prepared by:** Shelley Ware, Recreation Supervisor, Special Events

**Department:** Community Services

**Date:** May 7, 2024

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In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any Member of Council may request that this Information Report be placed on an upcoming General Committee or Council meeting agenda for discussion.

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to report back to Council regarding the results of the Expression of Interest for Food Vendors for the 2024 Aurora's Concerts in the Park.

- Council directed staff to investigate a sustainable and equitable plan to establish support for local restaurants and food vendors that would allow them to showcase their cuisine at the 2024 Concerts in the Park series.
- Staff issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) for Food Vendors to participate in the 2024 Concerts in the Park series.
- Response from the Expression of Interest (EOI) for Food Vendor Opportunity at the 2024 Concerts in the Park series was low.

## Background

**Council directed staff to investigate a sustainable and equitable plan to establish support for local restaurants and food vendors that would allow them to showcase their cuisine at the 2024 Concerts in the Park series.**

At the April 25, 2023, Council Meeting the following Motion was passed:

1. Now Therefore Be it Hereby Resolved That staff investigate the feasibility of implementing a pilot project for the summer 2023 Concerts in the Park to allow

the consumption of licensed beverages by sales only on August 23 and August 30 including beer and wine for purchase only and report back to Council for direction; and

2. That staff investigate a sustainable and equitable plan for establishing support for local restaurants and food vendors cuisine at the Concerts in the Park series for 2024 bringing a report to Council in time for the consideration in the 2024 budget; and
3. That staff review our licensing bylaw that relates to mobile food and refreshment vendors and report back to Council with any recommended changes.

Between 2018 and 2023, with the exclusion of 2020 and 2021 (due to the impact of COVID-19), the Town of Aurora had an exclusive Food Vendor partnership with the Aurora Farmers Market. This enabled up to 12 vendors to provide a sample Farmers Market for the summer concert series. Out of the 12 vendors, approximately five to six were food-based vendors representing a wide range of cuisine including, Indian, Italian, Dutch, French and Canadian with options at affordable price points for the quality of the food served and portion size. The food options included meals of substance, lighter faire, snacks and coffee and tea.

Partnering with the Aurora Farmers Market was efficient, overall seamless, and well received by the concert attendees. The Town had a guarantee to have a variety of high-quality vendors at each concert, reliable and sustainable revenue sources, an efficient process as all approvals from the health unit were done at once and used minimal staff resources to achieve this.

As a result of the Notice of Motion on April 25, 2023, conversations with the Aurora Farmers Market took place in the Fall of 2023 noting that there would be an open call for food vendors for the 2024 season. Staff encouraged the Aurora Farmers Market members to participate individually in the EOI.

## **Analysis**

### **Staff issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) for Food Vendors to participate in the 2024 Concerts in the Park series in March 2024.**

Staff prepared an EOI for Food Vendors at the 2024 Concerts in the Park series, launched for the month of March 2024, with a closing date of March 29. Due to an

overall lack of response midway through this EOI and to further try to entice submissions, staff took the following actions:

- Changed the fee to participate from \$62.67 (including HST) per day to 10 per cent of gross net sales. Both fee structures are on the approved Fees and Charges Schedule
- Extended the EOI by another week closing on April 5.

The EOI was promoted using a variety of tactics including inclusion on the:

- Concert in the Park webpage
- Town's Social Media Channels
- Aurora Notice Board
- Staff outreach to food vendors on file and directly to the Farmers Market vendors

**Response from the Expression of Interest (EOI) for Food Vendor Opportunity at the 2024 Concerts in the Park was low.**

The EOI submissions received, included an ice cream stand (from Newmarket), a hot dog cart (from Richmond Hill), a wood oven pizza vendor (home based Aurora business), and one previous Farmers Market vendor. Only two of these submissions were local and not all committed to the nine weeks of the concert series.

Currently, the Aurora Farmers Market is focused on opening the market for the season and because of this change in direction with the Town doing an open call for vendors, they no longer have the ability to partner with the Town in this capacity at this time but continue to encourage their individual vendors to participate. However, the individual vendors would be responsible for paying to participate for each evening, which may be a hardship for some of those vendors to return.

As staff have experienced from year-round food vendor recruitment for other town events and other programs such as Auroralicious, it is a challenge for local restaurants to be equipped to operate in a mobile capacity outside of their restaurants. This involves them having staff at the event, and staff in the restaurant. When patrons order food in restaurants for the most part the food is prepared on demand, however at events, a certain level of food preparation is required increasing the level of financial risk for the vendor and the increase of food wastage.

One local restaurant did express they would like to participate if they had a guarantee of sales, otherwise known as a catering model, whereby the Town places the order for

food, picks it up and then the Town resells it at the park. The Town does not have the capacity for this, and the financial risk would fall on the Town as well as the disposal of wasted food.

This lack of interest from local restaurants and food vendors may change between now and the start of the concert series. However, based on current feedback there may be a drop in service level and overall experience in terms of lack of diverse cuisine and overall variety of food options at the Concerts in the Park series in 2024.

### **Advisory Committee Review**

None

### **Legal Considerations**

All food vendors that wish to participate, they will be required to show proof of insurance and comply with all public health requirements.

### **Financial Implications**

The financial impact for 2024 is unknown at this time.

### **Communications Considerations**

Communications will work with the Events Team to communicate to event attendees' clear expectations on food availability at the Concert in the Park series by posting updates to the website and social media.

### **Climate Change Considerations**

The recommendations from this report do not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

### **Link to Strategic Plan**

The recommendations in this report support two pillars of strategic plan:

Providing additional services to attract more spectators supports the Strategic Plan goal of ***Enabling a diverse, creative, and resilient economy*** in its accomplishment in

satisfying requirements in the following key objective within this goal statement:  
***Supporting small business and encouraging a more sustainable business environment.***

AND

**Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all** in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goals statements:

- Invest in sustainable infrastructure
- Celebrating and promoting our culture
- Encourage an active and healthy lifestyle
- Strengthen the fabric of our community

### **Alternative(s) to the Recommendation**

1. Council may provide further direction.

### **Conclusions**

Staff are concerned that there will be a perceived drop in service level for food vendor options, price points and variety of options for the 2024 Concerts in the Park series. The EOI that was issued will remain open without a close date, but each vendor must be cleared with health unit approval 30 days prior to each concert date if they don't commit to the entire concert series.

Moving forward for this season, it is going to involve more staff resources concentrated over the next 3 months to try and recruit food vendors and to ensure there is a food vendor at each concert night. Staff are committed to try everything possible to have food vendors that have a cuisine that differentiates from the cuisine of traditional hot dog cart options at each concert night.

Priority for 2025 Concert in the Park series is for Staff to try to restore the service levels for food vendor options that was experienced in 2023 and prior.

### **Attachments**

Food Vendor Opportunity Request for Expression of Interest

## **Previous Reports**

CMS23-040 – Mobile Food and Licensed Beverage Consumption at Concerts in the Park  
– Pilot Update

## **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on April 18, 2024

## **Approvals**

**Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services**

**Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer**

**TOWN OF AURORA**  
**Department of Community Services**  
**FOOD VENDOR OPPORTUNITY**  
**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

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The Department of Community Services requests to hear from food vendors that are interested to sell food during Aurora's Concerts in the Park series in the Aurora Town Park (49 Wells Street). Aurora's Concert series is a weekly concert on Wednesdays in July and August from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. There is an average of 1000 attendees per concert. Attendees are permitted to bring their own snacks or picnics, but having food vendors on site has been beneficial. At each concert there will be on site waste management services, access to municipal grade water, but no access to power.

Interested food vendors are requested to submit their proposal to the Recreation Supervisor, Special Events at [sware@aurora.ca](mailto:sware@aurora.ca).

**Expression of Interest needs to include the following:**

1. A minimum of two references for providing this service in an outdoor special event setting, including an overview of the applicant's involvement along with hours of service, number of staff on site and approximate event attendance numbers.
2. The menu (brand, serving size) and pricing for all food that will be available for purchase.
3. A description and diagram of the food vending area including dimensions of the required space. The diagram needs to include the required 2-part hand wash station. Municipal grade water source is available on site for applicant to use to fill water containers, but a direct hook up is not available.
4. Full contact information of the applicant and confirmation for the location of the business (whether it is home based or otherwise)
5. Agree in writing to obtain, that the Town's mandatory requirements of obtaining approval from York Region Health Unit to operate as a food vendor, a minimum of 30 days prior to the event. If the applicant is a food truck the applicant will be required to get a food truck vendor license from the Town of Aurora By Law Division a minimum of 30 days prior to the event. And that, a minimum of one food server on site must have a current Provincially recognized Food Handler certificate. Applicant needs to agree to provide Proof of Certification for each server to the Department of Community Services prior to the event.
6. The food vendor must agree to be ready to fully service customers between 6 p.m. and 8:45 p.m. In your submission, please indicate if you will participate on each day of the event series. If you cannot participate in all dates, please indicates which dates you can. Event operating times at Aurora Town Park (49 Wells Street) are as follows:

- July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, August 7, 14, 21 and 28, 2024
  - Event time 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.,
  - Service time 6 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.
7. Written agreement to participate in any weather condition unless the concert has been cancelled.
  8. Written agreement that a proof of insurance will be provided to the Department of Community Services, a minimum of 30 days prior to the event. A minimum of \$2 million dollars in general liability coverage is required. The Corporation of the Town of Aurora must be listed as a co-insured on the organization's insurance policy.
  9. The fee to participate is 10% of vendor gross sales per concert evening or a fee of \$62.67 (including HST) per concert evening. The proposal to include a confirmation of which fee the applicant is choosing.
  10. The applicant must agree to not use single use plastics as restricted by Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulation and is to limit packaging where possible. Proposal is to outline what green practices or initiatives the applicant will have in place such as reduced energy consumption, using eco-friendly materials, reducing waste etc.

Thank you for your interest in this partnership opportunity. All submissions will be evaluated for consideration and approval.

If you have any questions, please contact the Special Events Supervisor at (905) 726-4762 or email [sware@aurora.ca](mailto:sware@aurora.ca)